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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 10, 2006

Meadowlands Begins Major Push for Solar Power

NJMC Targets 20 MW of Renewable Energy by the Year 2020

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission today announced a number of measures to establish the District as a global competitor in renewable energy. This initiative includes 20 megawatts (MW) of new sources of renewable energy in the Meadowlands District by the year 2020, starting with a minimum of 5 MW through photovoltaic cells. These initiatives also aim to attract cutting-edge technology companies and jobs to the area.

“This project will provide enormous environmental and economic benefits for the Meadowlands District, as well as set a precedent for the state’s commitment to renewable energy,” said New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Commissioner and NJMC Chair Susan Bass Levin. “The Meadowlands District has the infrastructure and recent history of regional cooperation needed to implement this renewable energy initiative.”

The NJMC will pursue construction of a photovoltaic power system generating a minimum of 5 MW, larger than any system currently existing in North America. Based on an internal renewable energy report to the NJMC Board, about 1.3 million square feet will be needed to accommodate a 5MW system. Much of this space may already be available on NJMC properties, including roof space, parking lots and garages, remediated landfills and adjacent properties.

The NJMC has been collecting methane gas from more than 700 acres of landfills since 1987. This alternative form of energy takes landfill gas and converts it into a form of energy which yields energy, economic and environmental benefits. A portion of the gas recovered is fed into the PSE&G pipelines and supplies the needs of more than 10,000 households. The remainder of the gas is used as a fuel in internal combustion engines to generate electricity.

The NJMC also will create a Renewable Energy Task Force for the Meadowlands District, which will be responsible for developing a Renewable Energy Master Plan for the District over the next year. This plan will develop a strategy for the creation of 20 MW of renewable energy in the Meadowlands District by 2020. This will include examining solar, tidal, wind, geothermal and other sources of renewable energy.

The Taskforce will include representatives from the NJMC’s Board of Commissioners, the Hackensack Meadowlands Municipal Committee, the New Jersey Board of Public

Utilities, the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce, New York New Jersey Baykeeper, Hackensack Riverkeeper, New Jersey Chapter of The Sierra Club, and New Jersey Audubon Society. The Taskforce will receive technical support from The Center for Energy, Economic and Environmental Policy at Rutgers University.

In addition, the NJMC will work with the New Jersey the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and New Jersey Department of Commerce to attract renewable energy industries to the Meadowlands District – such as solar panel assembly – to increase the high-tech job market in the state. It will also pursue ancillary companies and organizations that can provide the necessary research to take renewable energy technologies to higher levels of effectiveness.

“The economic benefits of renewable energy, combined with the environmental reasons to pursue this endeavor, make our choice about bringing this industry to the Meadowlands District an easy one,” Levin said. “Everyone who pays a utility bill knows that no matter what season, the cost to power our homes and businesses continues to rise. Renewable energy has the added benefit of providing a stable source of energy that won’t fluctuate in price according to world events or shortages in materials.”

The NJMC also voted to move forward in working with the state and regional agencies, county and municipal government bodies, and private businesses, who have already expressed interest in the solar power grid, in order to establish a consortium to generate solar power in the District. The Bergen County Utilities Authority, the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey are among the agencies expressing interest in the project.

“Today we are following Governor Jon S. Corzine’s lead in pursuing an increased role for renewable energy in New Jersey’s power generation,” said NJMC Executive Director Robert Ceberio. “We’re serious about becoming a global leader in renewable energy. The time to pursue these resources is now.”

The emission reductions from a 5 MW facility equal taking 626 cars or 447 SUVs off the road each year. It would remove the amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by 950 acres of trees. Each year, this facility will eliminate 16,170 pounds of nitrogen oxides, 50,001 pounds of sulfur dioxide, and 7,178,009 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

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